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Journey of Woman in Gently Falls the Bakula – Sudha Murthy

Abstract: Sudha Murthy's novel is a beautiful journey of knowing India and Indians at its best and how their strong values mixed with a changing modern adaptation helps to shape the world in a better place. Sudha Murthy's novels address many modern real life social problems and even give possible solution to it. Sudha's novels bring a picture of modern India with its mixed social values which are in tune with modern world and traditional India. Sudha Murthy has painted this novel "*Gently Falls the Bakula*" with mere reality, touching the whimsical and hypocritical and chauvinistic attitude of male.

Key words: Identity, loneliness, patriarchal society, selfish, depression, suppression, materialistic, power, ambitious, psychological disorder ,love, status, separation, emotion, longings, artificial, successes, economical.

Introduction

Sudha Murthy was born on 19 August 1950 in Shiggaon in Karnataka, India, daughter of surgeon Dr.R.H. Kulkarni and Vimala Kulkarni. She is an Indian humanitarian and writer in Kannada and English. She begins her professional career as a computer Engineer. She is the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation and a member of public health care initiatives of the Gates Foundation. '*Gently Falls the Bakula*', is a story written by Sudha Murthy in the background of traditional 1980s which is relevant even today. It is Murthy's first novel and remains close to her heart. This story probes the values and ethics of modern man life and marriage. Murthy has the knack of writing about issues much debated about and still adds fresh perspective to it. In the process she compels one to take a look at age-old values and the dissonance of gender inequality and seeing her worth beyond of a wife is explored in a very realistic way in the Indian context.

Journey of Woman

Sudha Murthy's novel is a beautiful journey of knowing India and Indians at its best and how their strong values mixed with a changing modern adaptation helps to shape the world in a better place. Sudha Murthy's novels address many modern real life social problems and even give possible solution to it. Sudha's novels are a thoughtfully- crafted and articulated set of creative literary works which have been well appreciated at many national and international platforms. Sudha's novels bring a picture of modern India with its mixed social values which are in tune with modern world and traditional India. Sudha Murthy has painted this novel "*Gently Falls the Bakula*" with mere reality, touching the whimsical and hypocritical and chauvinistic attitude of male. In this novel the marital relationship of the protagonist fragile and is easily destroyed by her selfish husband who had cheated her. This article deals with woman's struggles in the field of family, social, and working places. Murthy's novel is *Gently*

Falls the Bakula published by Penguin books India New Delhi in 2008. The major theme of this novel is Self - Identity of woman.

Self -Identity is not a new subject to modern Indian writers but here Murty traces the identity of woman in domestic life, social life and with special reference of husband and wife relationship. A woman is not a mere a part of the family she is the part of the world, she is not a part of the husband but she is the better part of man's life. From the beginning to present many writers, great personality in the all community and society raised their voice against freedom of woman, economical individual independence of woman, woman's education. This novel deals with the oppression of woman and how they manage to free themselves from oppression. Sudha Murthy gives the great message in her novel '*Gently Falls the Bakula*' the title itself portrays the message how the modern days life moves on. The novel portrays the beautiful flower falls from the tree like the marriage life of Shrimati falls from selfish, ambitious husband Shrikant.

Murty explains Shrimati and Shrikant's three phases of life. The first phase is early educational life of the couple; Shrimati is neighbor to Shrikant house. She is a slim and tall girl, who has an interest in historical study, she likes to string a fragrance Bakula flower in her hair; she has long hair that reached below her knees. She is the top rank holder in her class where Srikant Deshpande studying. He is the only rival to Shrimati Deshpande in the class room; He is also tall, fair and handsome young man. He is known for his strong determination. He is not like Shrimati, he has interest in science subject. The symbolical representation of the subjects History and Science, History talks about past, Science deals with future. Both are contradictory by nature. Not only the chosen subjects of the characters but also the person Shrikant always defeated by Shrimati in all the competition even scoring of marks in the examination, Shrikant and his family members' only ambition is to win her in the public examination because it is not only Shrikant's prestige but the family also. Though both of the

family is neighbor, they do not have a good relationship from the last few generations. They are lived in purely patriarchal society where the head of the family decided everything. Women are in both families always suppressed and subservient, irrespective of their age. Once upon a time the family had everything, but today they have nothing more than a huge ancestral house and few pieces of land. Though they are neighbors, their forefathers always fight like cats and dogs. The main reason for their enmity is the mountain-like ego, another reason is both family worshipped different goddess. Shrikant's family worshipped Lord Shiva in the name of Smartha and Shrimati families worshipped the Lord Vishnu in the name of Vaishnava. It is not an issue for the men; it is the major factor for the woman to fight the result is there is no communication between two families.

The second phase of Shrikant and Shrimati life deal the higher education, friendship between them and their love affairs. When they meet separately in the train, they understand their true nature and behavior. With the elegance of beautiful looking of Shrimati attracts Shrikant and he starts speaking to her, both of them congratulate each other. Shrimati says there is no difference between first and second rank it is examiner's mood and few better answer. Once again he is attracted by the open talk of Shrimati. In higher study, Shrimati chooses history subject. Shrikant raised a question, why she chooses arts subject though she scored high rank in school. She replies,

"I have a principle of my own we should do what we really like. For two things in life it is very important for us to make our own decisions one is education. I believe we must study only that subject which we like the other one is marriage, because partners remain with each other forever in life. Other things like choosing a saree, buying a house can be reversed. But not these two things." (27)

Shrikant understands Shrimati's view on marriage and life partner. Before in this incident he has heard only negative remarks of Shrimati's character from his mother and sister.

The space between two houses is reduced by the fragrance of Shrimati and Bakula flower. Shrimati is outwardly looking unattractive but she has divine nature like Bakula flower. In their schooldays and college days teased by their friends in the means of name; Shrimati and Shrikant names ends with 'Deshpande'. Every day they exchange their love in the form of letters along with Bakula flowers.

The third phase of the story deals marriage life of the couple. After completing his higher study, Shrikant worked as software engineer in Bombay. He writes a letter about the mechanical life of Bombay to her beloved Shrimati. At the age of twenty- three he achieved his goal. He explains to his mother about love matter with Shrimati, he wishes to marry her; but his mother is shocked.

"Shrimati was hardly ten months younger to her son, ordinary looking, without money and, more than anything, her enemy's daughter! How would she face the people? What would they say? They would make fun of her. And the Desais, Sheenappa and Rama's in-laws would mock her. Worse than that was the fact that her own son had gone to Rindakka's house and begged for their daughter."(67)

Both families strongly oppose to the alliance; but Shrimati and Shrikant try to convince their parents and get married. Now she called Shrimati Shrikant Deshpande officially. After the marriage she stepped into the mother-in-laws house as every woman does. She is unwelcomed by her mother- in-law. She was ill-treated by her mother-in-law in all the aspects of her day to life. Gankakka says the quality of the saree depends on its thread and the nature of a daughter depends on her mother. Shrimati feels very helpless when her mother criticized Gangakka but she keep silence. The young couple placed in Bombay. She left alone at home. She recalls her mother Kamala, this first time in twenty-two years that Shrimati is away from her mother. She is soft-spoken and well- behaved that it is difficult for her to answer back. She does not want to create any problems for anyone. The painful journey of Shrimati marriage life

Shrikant reaches glories height and improves his material wealth but Shrimat loneliness increased day by day because her desire of mother is not being fulfilled past ten years. She is interested in adopts a baby but Shrikant never shows any interest in adopting a child. She ready to sacrifice her higher education, she said when you are mine, and your loan is also mine. It comes as a package. *"I cannot say I want only my husband. His joys and difficulties are also acceptable to me".*(77) As an Indian girl she respects the Indian culture she said Professor Mike Collins sir, *"I do love history but I love Shrikant well. I can always continue my studies later"*. She believes that it is not necessary to have a doctorate to gain knowledge. For her, degrees do not matter. Professor realized she differs from her own daughter Dorothy she is ready to sacrifice everything for marriage. She does everything for Shrikant but he has not noticed her sincerity, he does know the value of her sacrifices for him. Now she is depressed she remembers her mother's words.

"In our society, you marry not only an individual, but also his family. If I have understood them well, they will never accept you as a part of their family. They will never love you." (53)

She has two principles in her life one is education another one is marriage now her principles are broken because Shrikant has taste of professional success. As a wife, she is also happy for her husband success but Shrikant put it in a different way; repeated success makes a person an arrogant and occasional failure makes a person confident, initially men start to work for money but soon, money becomes unimportant. It is power. There is nothing like power. Power is like liquor. Once of power catches hold of an ambitious person, there is no escape from it is a vicious circle. Like in a whirlpool, it is difficult to come out of it. More work, more involvement and more power. The individual loses the ability to see and enjoy anything outside of his work. He is immersed in work throughout the day. Work is his breath. What happens when such people grow old, all the pages in their book of life will be empty, except page of achievement. Shrikant book contains different computer languages, different specifications and

products, but nothing about his wife, family or friends. She feels her individual freedom attacked by the selfish husband. He criticizes her favorite's subject history.

"Don't talk about your worthless history. The world of business is so different from yours. History cannot feed you. Don't behave like a historian at such parties. You should remember that you represent our company....After all, what is there in Indians' history to boast so much about?"(125).

She replies do you mean history is a subject of the dead, the lost and the defeated, does the past not have any relevance to the present, according to you. Her face flushed with emotion. This is the first time in the ten years of their marriage she raises her voice he is unable to digest he feel they are two strangers living under the same roof. She continues her anger to Shrikant about his views of life he has one set of rules for her and another for his mother and sister Rama. Her mind is filled with sensation. Her heart is full of hope and longing. Her eyes filled with tears and rolled down her cheeks, emotionally. She treated her like a machine. He gives appointments to everybody but he doesn't have any time for her.

"Don't I deserve one, don't you have any duty towards me, you spend all day occupied by your company, physically and mentally. What is left for me you give me false assurances every time and I believe you..., when you do not care me, why should I care about you? Shri tell me now who is important, your wife or your profession? Ask your heart and tell me". (148)

She cannot control her deep inner feelings. She realizes her position in that house the only reason is she is madly in love with Shrikant. She is not ambitious she decided to continue once again a student even today, Indian history is her fingertips, she does not like this way of life she analyses herself. A house is made up of just four walls but a home is where there is love, affection and a meaningful relationship. In life, beauty, power, money, youth are not constraint. Real wealth is knowledge. The more you give, the wealthier you become. There is

limit to which one could be obedient and subservient, but once that limit is crossed, the individual's freedom is more important for everyone so she has great courage today she like to continue her desire about Ph.D. she likes to breathe fresh air . She continues,

“shri, I loved history and I loved you. In fact once upon a time loved you more than history. But when you lost your finer sentiments, chasing your success in the field of business, I was left with nothing then history. For me, the glamour of money, house, and car is immaterial. Shri ask yourself If you were in my shoes, what would you have done?the same thing that I am doing. Shri you are my guru. I learnt from you.”(161)

Shrikant recalls the story of Bhamati, the woman who has dedicated her entire life to her husband and he felt Shrimati is a shade better than Bhamati, who has never seen the outside world and did not know her capacity. *“Every woman could not become Bhamati. Each woman had her won limits”* She defies with the tradition belief *“... a woman should stay with her husband irrespective of what he was...”* As Norah Helmer in Ibsen's *“A Doll's House”*, Shrimati says to Shrikant, *“Shri, I am leaving and I don't have any plans to return, I am handing all the responsibilities of the house to you”*. The physical and psychological distance between them increased so much that it engulfed the sweet relationship between them, which resulted in their finals separation. As a result, they are inflicted by depression; Wikipedia describes depression as, *“Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can affect a person's thoughts, behaviour, feelings and sense of well being. People with depressed mood can feel sad, anxious, empty, hopeless, helpless, worthless, guilty, irritable, ashamed or restless. They may lose interest in activities that were once pleasurable, experience loss of appetite or overeating, have problems concentrating, remembering details or making decisions and may contemplate, attempt or commit suicide. Insomnia, excessive sleeping, fatigue, aches, pains, digestive problems or reduced energy may also be present.”* Erich Fromm, one of the most famous psychologists of modern times noted, *“A new question has arisen in modern*

man's mind question namely whether 'Life is worth living' and correspondingly the feeling that one's life is a failure or is a success. This idea is based on the concept of life as an enterprise which should show profit." This remark shows that human life today has become a trade. Shrikant and many Indian educated young men always desire to live western life in Indian soil but actually, they lost Indian family structure. Shrikant can compare with Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, a tragic hero of '*Death of a Salesman*'. Willy like many other young boys and girls of the time had been possessed by the American dream to be rich. He acquires riches of all kind but lost the very essence of life.

She knows that many women go into depression, become alcoholics and in some cases become kleptomaniacs. Psychiatrists believe that women do this in order to draw the attention of their busy, ambitious husband. Shrimati does not want to sit in the corner of the room, crying, cribbing and begging mercy of Shrikant and his family because Shrikant has no time spend with her, so she accepts herself and chooses the own way of life. There some incidents that happen in the life and those incidents are so strong that change the life style and mould the best. Shrimati realises that education is one of the blessings of life that she experienced in her past ten years marriage life with Shrikant. As a social feminist, Sudha Murty clearly portrays principle of life through the characterisation of Shrikant and Shrimati.

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